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"IDEAS FOR LIVING": AN AWARD -WINNING PROGRAM

Joanne Austin* and Bill Dwinelle

ABSTRACT:

Is your life-skills program stagnating? Are you getting all you could from your volunteers? Do you have limited personnel and financial resources? We will recap our experience in creating and operating a program that was selected by CSREES in 2002 as a National Program of Excellence. We will showcase both our mistakes and successes in ways that could benefit other volunteer-based programs. The "Ideas for Living" program helps at-risk and limited-resource individuals enhance their basic life skills. The program goals are to promote more positive family functioning, increase self-sufficiency, decrease isolation by establishing stronger social networks, and ultimately to reduce dependence on public assistance. Established in 1993, growth was erratic during the first few years; however new approaches were instituted and the program evolved. Since 1999, the number of classes presented has accelerated at a double-digit pace. Last year 14 volunteers taught 117 life-skills classes to 849 limited-resource individuals. On post-session evaluations 86 percent of the participants cited ways they planned to use the information they learned in class. During 1-3 month follow-up interviews 83 percent of participants surveyed reported they were using what they learned to better manage their families and homes. You will learn the techniques that make this award-winning program work including: creating hands-on, activity-based lessons; conducting innovative volunteer training; accommodating the needs of volunteers; keeping program costs low; addressing ethnic and literacy challenges; forming strong partnerships with agencies; establishing an ongoing program evaluation, update, and revision methodology.

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THE 4-H VOLUNTEER RESEARCH & KNOWLEDGE TAXONOMY: IDENTIFYING VOLUNTEER COMPETENCIES NECESSARY TO DELIVERY YOUTH PROGRAMS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT:

This study was designed to identify the competencies volunteers need to deliver 4-H programs and activities in the next decade. Competencies are underlying characteristics of people and indicate "ways of behaving or thinking, generalizing across situations and enduring for a reasonably long period of time" (Guion, 1991). This survey research was conducted utilizing mail questionnaires to target populations that included direct contact 4-H volunteers and county 4-H agents in Colorado, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, New Mexico, Texas and West Virginia. Fifty subjects were drawn from the volunteer and agent populations in each state with state Volunteerism Specialists being census surveyed. Part I of the instrument asked respondents to qualitatively identify competencies which volunteers will need to effectively deliver 4-H programs. Part II focused on respondents' volunteer program characteristics. Part III contained respondent's demographic characteristics. Thirty-two competencies were identified in Part I. They include: Communication; Organization, Planning Skills & Record Keeping; Subject Matter Skills; Interpersonal Skills; Leadership; Ages & Stages of Youth Development; Technology & Computer; Youth/Adult Partnerships, Enjoy working with kids; Patience; Time Management & Availability; Organizational Structure of 4-H and CES; Group/Facilitation Skills/Team Building; Teaching Skills/Program Delivery; Caring, Compassionate, Love Kids; Diversity; Behavior & Conflict Management; Ethics, Honesty, Morals, Role Model; Risk Management & Liability; Volunteer Recruitment / Parent Involvement; Motivation; Financial Resources & Procurement; Community Capacity Building; Experiential Learning; Youth Empowerment & Delegation; Willing to learn and change; Addressing different Learning Styles; Assessment and Evaluation; Problem Solving Skills; Marketing and Publicity; Club Management; Needs Assessment; and Recognition.

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VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION IS VITAL

Patricia Gruber *, Zona Hutson and Deborah Shrive

ABSTRACT:

The ability to identify the major motivators of adults and teens in accepting and continuing in volunteer roles is of vital importance to Extension programming efforts. Understanding motivational styles, being able to determine an individual's motivational style, and then identifying the most appropriate ways to recognize volunteers according to their personal style are vital to the success of programs built around volunteer support. To be recognized and appreciated is a basic human need and a vital ingredient to enduring, growing, and successful volunteer-based programs. Call it recognition, call it appreciation, call it what you will, but never leave it undone! Each volunteer is motivated for different reasons and appreciate types of recognition specific to their personal style. It takes a variety of ideas to meet recognition needs within programming. For growth, change, and continued interest, new and creative thoughts are necessary to spark a variety of solutions for Extension educators' needs as they work with diverse groups of individuals and situations. Recognition can be accomplished in many ways; with a few words, with expensive or inexpensive ideas, with additional responsibilities, or with any appropriate methods and ideas. Understanding how to identify motivational types and then meet those specific and individual needs of volunteers will help to maintain and grow your volunteer base. The creativity comes in designing unique and specific ideas for recognition.

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STRENGTHENING YOUR FACILITATION SKILLS

Jane E. Haskell *

ABSTRACT:

Agencies and organizations, volunteers and citizens are often expected to interact in collaborative groups. A five-part series, "Strengthening Your Facilitation Skills," was developed by two colleagues at University of Maine Cooperative Extension to help group members more effectively design and manage group processes to achieve desired results. Participants in the twenty-hour program learn and practice a set of facilitation skills. Facilitation best practices are modeled and critiqued by presenters and participants throughout the experiential program. Participants utilize a variety of tools as they practice contracting, designing agendas, moving from ideas to action planning, managing disruptive behaviors and resolving conflict. Resource notebooks are provided to all participants; optional texts are available to purchase. Post-program assessments revealed a better understanding of the facilitation process by all participants. Nearly three-quarters of participants volunteered to donate time to facilitate a two to three hour program in their community. Prior to the training, 50% or more of the participants were sporadically or not practicing 21 of 27 facilitation skills. After the training, all participants report they usually or now practice all 27-core facilitation practices. A long-term reflective appraisal of participants, who had facilitated an average of 4.5 community meetings, revealed an increase in knowledge manifested by increased confidence, using more participatory activities and improved group productivity. With decreased state and community budgets, productive group processes are becoming critical. Skilled community leaders and group members are now able to advance the productivity and capacity of communities to advocate for their citizens' needs.

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TEACHING LIFE SKILLS--A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT:

Amidst ongoing changes in Extension programming, there remains a need to offer and deliver life skills training. A case in point is the Kentucky Master Volunteer in Clothing Program. This statewide community outreach endeavor is into its thirteenth year training and empowering volunteers to teach sewing in their communities. New volunteer involvement and the initial basic training is offered by request/need only. Despite the rigorous demands and high-quality standards to which program participants are held, interest remains keen and the program continues to grow and flourish. Sewing is not a dying art, nor does Extension have to eliminate this traditional life skill from its programming. The key is to train and involve select volunteers through the "master" concept. In addition to teaching the life skill of sewing in their communities, volunteer participants have also documented growth in other areas. These include improving their own self-esteem, increasing their teaching skills and abilities, networking with others in their community, providing an opportunity to demonstrate leadership skills/ability, and growth/expansion their own sewing expertise. Benefits to their communities include successful grants bringing in money to purchase sewing equipment for their Extension offices, home-based businesses started, increases in retail sales at home town stores, reviving 4-H/Youth involvement, and imparting creative, stress-relieving activities to both youth and adult audiences. During this session, time will be allotted to discuss potential avenues for states to join forces to continue this traditional life-skill programming.

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4-H VOLUNTEER CORE COMPETENCIES: A SELF-ASSESSMENT

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ABSTRACT:

4-H Volunteer Core Competencies are the knowledge and skills needed by volunteers to help them achieve success as 4-H volunteers. Providing training for 4-H volunteers is an on-going challenge for Extension staff. In almost every state, discussions have been occurring related to revising volunteer training materials. At the same time, serendipitous discussions have been occurring related to developing competency-based volunteer training materials and resources. A Volunteer Core Competency Self-Assessment tool was designed to help volunteers, and staff that supervise them, identify skills and knowledge that volunteers already have to help them succeed as a 4-H volunteer. The self-assessment can also help in identifying areas where additional information and/or training may be needed. Discussions about 4-H Volunteer Core Competencies began in New England in 2001 when 4-H staff and volunteers from Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and Massachusetts met to identify the skills needed by 4-H volunteers to help them succeed. From that dialogue, a list of 28 competencies was then developed and included in a survey sent to 694 Maine 4-H volunteers. They were asked to rate the importance of the 28 competencies. Responses from 264 volunteers were used to identify and define nine categories of 4-H Volunteer Core Competencies: Working effectively with youth, Interpersonal Skills, Communication, Teaching, Recognition, 4-H Life Skills, Understanding 4-H and Cooperative Extension, Understanding Youth Development and Understanding Rules, Guidelines, Regulations, Policies, etc. The nine competencies were used to develop the self-assessment instrument. They are also being used to develop competency based training modules for 4-H volunteers.

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GRANDMENTORING: CONNECTING ACROSS THE LIFE COURSE

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ABSTRACT:

The Youth and Families with Promise two-level mentoring program was designed and implemented through Utah State University Extension Services to address youth problems through early intervention with at-risk youth, ages 10-14, and their families. Youth referrals come from school administrators, officers of the Juvenile Court, community social service agencies, or from parents. When a referral is received, the youths' parent(s) are interviewed to obtain their consent for the youth to participate in the program and its evaluations. The youth is then matched with volunteer mentors recruited through universities, colleges, the family's religious congregation, or from community volunteer organizations. Whenever possible, youth are matched with both college-age and grandparent-age mentors (grandmentors) who work directly with the youth, focusing on building academic and social skills while providing a positive role model for the youth. Program youth, their families, and mentors participate in monthly group experiential learning activities and periodic service projects. Through these activities and interaction with the youth, grandmentors support parent(s) and assist in the development of strong family bonds, better communication, and clear family rules. Data were collected through focus group interviews with parents and grandmentors which were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim for data analysis. The information from study could prove useful in designing comprehensive support programs for families who are at-risk for problems and who experience substantial stress. Older adults can provide important support and stability to a mentoring program.

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